

Message Text

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TAGS: EPAP, EGEN, PINS, BM

SUBJECT: FIELD TRIP REPORT

SUMMARY:

1. OBSERVATIONS OF EMBOFF DURING RECENT FIELD TRIP INDICATE BURMA WILL HAVE BETTER THAN AVERAGE RICE HARVEST THIS YEAR, BUT SUGAR CANE CROP WILL BE NO LARGER THAN LAST YEAR. WORK ON AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE AT YEZIN CONTINUING, AND FOUR FAO EXPERTS STATIONED THERE. NO REPORTS OF RECENT INSURGENT/DACOIT ACTIVITY ON ROAD BETWEEN RANGOON AND PYINMANA, BUT FAO EXPERTS NOT ALLOWED TO TRAVEL ROUTE WITHOUT MILITARY ESCORT. END SUMMARY

2. DURING RECENT TRIP THROUGH PART OF BURMA'S RICE GROWING DELTA AREA AND NORTH TO PYINMANA, EMBOFF NOTED OUTLOOK FOR RICE CROP IN BURMA THIS YEARS APPEARS VERY GOOD. FIELDS BEGINNING TO RIPEN AND SOME HARVESTING ALREADY UNDERWAY. ALL PADDY FIELDS IN EXCELLENT SHAPE AFTER FAVORABLE GROWING CONDITIONS OF LAST SEVERAL MONTHS. NO EXTENSIVE INSECT OR DISEASE DAMAGE OBSERVED AND EXPECT HIGHER THAN NORMAL YIELD. FARMERS MOST OPTIMISTIC AND PLEASED WITH HARVEST PROSPECTS. THESE OBSERVATIONS CONFIRMED BY WORLD BANK EXPERT WHO HAS BEEN STUDYING RICE CROP CONDITIONS IN BURMA'S DELTA AREA FOR PAST SEVERAL WEEKS.

3. SUGAR CAN HARVEST ALSO JUST BEGINNING AND FARMERS BRINGING THEIR FIRST LOADS TO GOVERNMENT BUYING STATIONS. MANY CANE FIELDS APPEAR TO HAVE SUFFERED DISEASE DAMAGE AND DOUBTFUL THAT

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THIS YEAR'S CROP IN AREAS OBSERVED WILL BE ANY LARGER THAN LAST

YEAR. SUGAR MILL AT PYINMANA HAS NOT YET BEGUN CRUSHING OPERATIONS.

4. CONSTRUCTION WORK CONTINUING AT AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE AT YEZIN (TEACHING STAFF AT AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE BEING RECALLED AND LOCAL OFFICIALS EXPECT CLASSES TO RESUME IN JANUARY.) ABOUT 500 ACRES AROUND INSTITUTE BEING UTILIZED AS EXPERIMENTAL FARM FOR RICE, BEANS, COTTON AND SUGAR CANE. SITE OF INSTITUTE WELL CHOSEN AS IT IS ON BORDER BETWEEN BURMA'S WET AND DRY ZONES VERY NEAR SHAN HILLS. THUS, IT IS SITUATED WITH EASY ACCESS TO THE VARIOUS CLIMATIC GROWING CONDITIONS IN BURMA. FOUR FAO EXPERTS STATIONED THERE SPECIALIZING IN FARM MANAGEMENT, RICE, COTTON AND LEGUMES.

5. FAO RICE EXPERT EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW HIGH YIELDING VARIETIES FOR POSSIBLE INTRODUCTION IN BURMA, BUT HE ADDED THAT IMPROVED MANAGEMENT (CONTROL OF WATER, FERTILIZER, LAND PREPARATION, TRANSPLANTING, ETC.) MORE IMPORTANT THAN NEW VARIETIES IF BURMA IS TO INCREASE PADDY YIELD. NEARLY ALL HIGH QUALITY RICE IN RURAL AREAS TRADED ON BLACKMARKET WITH PRICES RANGING FROM ABOUT K60 TO K80 PER BASKET, SO WHAT LOWER THAN PRICES IN RANGOON. EVEN FAO RICE SPECIALIST SAID HE HAD TO DEPEND ON BLACKMARKET FOR HIS RICE SUPPLY.

6. ROAD FROM PEGU TO PYINMANA IN VERY POOR CONDITION AND HAS DETERIORATED IN PAST SEVERAL YEARS. HARDTOPPED SURFACE VERY ROUGH AND WIDE ENOUGH FOR ONLY ONE LANE OF TRAFFIC; PASSING VEHICLES MUST PULL OVER TO SHOULDER. NO MAJOR REPAIR WORK UNDERWAY. TRAFFIC ON HIGHWAY LIGHT CONSISTING MAINLY OF GOVERNMENT TRUCK CONVOYS WHICH ARE TAKING RICE NORTH, PRESUMABLY FOR SHAN STATE AREA, AND FERTILIZER SOUTH TO RANGOON AND/OR DELTA AREA. FAO EXPERTS AT YEZIN NOT ALLOWED TO TRAVEL BETWEEN YEZIN AND RANGOON BY VEHICLE WITHOUT MILITARY ESCORT, BUT RESIDENTS ALONG ROUTE REPORTED NO RECENT INSURGENT OR DECOIT ACTIVITY ON ROAD. OSBORN

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